

VZCZCXRO5357
OO RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHKI #0159 0491319
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 181319Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9207
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS KINSHASA 000159

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - FEBRUARY 18

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

Security Situation in Eastern DRC

¶2. (SBU) MONUC reported that a joint RDF/FARDC force attacked the FDLR in the North Kivu town of Kashovo, pushing them into South Kivu to the southwest of Hombo. MONUC patrols observed IDP's on the road leading to Hombo, but noted that the numbers cited in the press are exaggerated. Further south, approximately 3,500 IDP's have shown up in Kalehe after fleeing FDLR movements. Still further south in Mwenga (southwest of Bukavu), an unknown number of FDLR fighters have signaled their desire to surrender.

¶3. (SBU) A reliable contact in EUSEC reported that January salaries for the FARDC are now available for disbursement, but the total was only enough for the regular FARDC and did not include payment for the recently integrated troops. EUSEC efforts to reform the FARDC have resulted in a substantially bigger payroll. Two years ago, a second class infantry soldier received only \$10 a month; they now receive \$60 per month. A MONUC briefer also noted that recently integrated battalions may be deployed to areas of possible conflict within days of integration, but will be withdrawn from action when the current operation is complete in order to undergo three months training.

¶4. (SBU) MONUC patrols in Ishasha (on the Ugandan border) reported that FARDC soldiers in the town have resorted to looting and firing weapons into the air. Separately, the Congolese National Police (PNC) is sending approximately 700 officers to Goma to deploy along the Rutshuru and Masisi road axes. A MONUC source said 210 arrived on February 17, with more to follow soon. MONUC will support the PNC logistically, and also provide mentoring and monitoring.

¶5. (SBU) Several integration regroupment centers have closed following the rapid integration and deployment of units. Kibirizi and Nyalima remain open, and Mubambiro was scheduled to begin operations on February 17. Mai Mai leaders claim that approximately 10,500 "ex-combatants" from other armed groups want to enter DDR programs, but MONUC notes that less than 15 percent possess weapons. Some officials in the FARDC and the GDRC want the DDR program to accept them anyway, but the UN will attempt to hold the line on the "one man, one weapon" policy, and channel these ineligible into other development programs.

¶6. (SBU) As of February 17, the DDRRR program has repatriated 1,040 persons to Rwanda since January 1, including 378 ex-combatants. UNHCR has repatriated 2,909, for a total of 3,942 Rwandan repatriations this year.

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